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Preserving a Smith

BY

REA WOODMAN, M. A.

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,
FRANKLIN, - OHIO.

Preserving a Smith

A Burlesque of Shadows
In Three Acts

BY
REA WOODMAN, M. A.

Author of "The Sweet Girl Graduates," "Bess Goes to Europe,"
"Galliger," and "The Rescue of Prince Hal."

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In conception this little nonsense play is founded on an incident in "The Noahs Afloat," an historical romance by the same author. As the effect to be obtained is grotesqueness, it is necessary that the action be melancholy rather than cheerful, the dialogue that of nervous rather than confident people, and further, that in the second and third acts the action be given entirely by the light of candles, said candles being carried by the several actors.

H. R. W.

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THE CHARACTERS OF THE BURLESQUE.

Admiral Noah, Commander of the Ark.

Shem, eldest son to the Admiral.

Ham, second son to the Admiral.

Japheth, youngest son to the Admiral.

Mehitable, wife to the Admiral.

Flossy, wife to Shem.

Jennie, wife to Ham.

Matilda, wife to Japheth.

John Smith, alias "Shiner," an ambitious Gamin.

Citizens. artizans, loafers, messengers, servants, animals, etc.

ACT I. *A Frank Steal. Monday Afternoon, February 3d, the Year of the Deluge.*

"No, Johnnie Smith, you cannot help, but you are a good little boy."

ACT II. *A Still Hunt. The Afternoon of the Twentieth Day out.*

"You're all ears. Why, don't you rent yourself out for your acoustic properties?"

ACT III. *An Easy Capture. The Night of the Same Day.*

"We have completed History by this night's work."

ACT I

(Monday Afternoon, February 3d, the Year of the Deluge. An open place adjoining Noah-ton. Citizens and loafers walking about, inspecting the Ark. John Smith ubiquitous. A broad gangway leads up to the door of the unseen Ark. A workman is pottering around, whistling and pounding intermittently.)

First Cit. Well, well, so that's it! (contemplating the unseen Ark). Do you think she'll float?

Second Cit. (gazing critically at the Ark). Oh yes, any old tub will float—until it sinks!

Third Cit. (shrugging his shoulders). But even a tub won't float on land! It's a monster all right!

First Cit. A monster bluff! There is n't going to be any Flood!

Second Cit. Bluff? (The workman pounds away cheerfully.) No man's going to build a shack like that (pointing to the Ark) for a bluff!

First Cit. Hey?

Second Cit. I say (workman pounds with great enthusiasm) I say no man's going to build a shack like that for a bluff.

Third Cit. Oh, he believes it's going to rain! It's a fad, but the Noahs can afford fads, you know. They say this thing cost five million; the boat alone, to say nothing of the live stock. Nobody knows what it'll cost to stock it. Of course it's all rank nonsense; look at the clumsy thing! Looks like a family cheesebox!

First Cit. Or a refrigerator car!

Third Cit. Well, we've no kick coming. It was n't our money.

First Cit. (aggressively). It was the people's money! Why have n't we a kick coming? And if there is a Flood

just to accommodate the Noahs, we'll all drown! Then I guess we'll have a kick coming! (*The Loafers nod agreement.*)

Third Cit. It's given thousands of men steady work, and put money into circulation—

Second Cit. That argument's old as Adam!

Third Cit. And it's as good an argument today as it was then. I say that the man who can make ten million dollars has a right to spend it as he pleases.

First Cit. (*more aggressively*). No man can make ten million dollars in one life-time. It's a physical impossibility. (*The Loafers nod emphatic agreement.*)

Third Cit. I don't say he can make it with a hoe or a hammer. I say if a man has *brains* enough to multiply his earning capacity a hundred times, he has a moral right to do it,—any man has. (*The Second Loafer much impressed, but not convinced.*)

First Cit. Oh, if you come down to a matter of rights, no man has a moral right to infringe on another man's earning capacity. Every time the rich man adds a new million to his pile, he makes it one thousand times harder for the poor man to earn a living. (*The Loafers in perfect accord.*)

Third Cit. (*with a comprehensive wave of his hand*). But what are you going to do? You can't keep a brainy man down; he will make money wherever you put him. You can't make laws that'll stop a man's mind from working overtime. Let's see you! Your long-haired Socialist stands around and growls about the rich man getting richer and the poor man getting poorer, but what are you going to do? You can't cut a man's brains out. That's murder. (*The Second Loafer wags his head thoughtfully, in melancholy endorsement.*) What are you going to do?

First Cit. But why is the rich man getting richer? Because he exploits the labor of the poor man, that's why. Under a Socialistic form of government—

Second Cit. (*cutting in hastily*). Oh, cut the argument! When do they start?

Third Cit. "Start?" Who start?

Second Cit. (*patiently*). The Noahs. When do they go aboard?

Third Cit. Oh, they go aboard today, but Heaven knows when they'll start.

First Loaf. (*taking his pipe from his mouth*). The Flood'll commence on the tenth of this month. They can't start until then.

Second Cit. (*absently, gazing at the Ark*). Naturally.

First Cit. (*sarcastically*). The Flood? I don't see any Flood!

Third Cit. Nor I! It's as dry 'round here as a Prohibition camp-meeting! Where is the Flood? Which Flood?

(*Meanwhile, two men servants have crossed and recrossed, carrying household furnishings into the Ark, assisted, sometimes, by a casual bystander. Citizens pass in and out, inspecting the Ark idly and curiously. John Smith and the workman are delighted to explain, in pantomime, the various features of interest.*)

First Loaf. Mr. Noah says it'll rain forty days and forty nights.

Second Cit. Mr. Noah's cracked! What all have they got in there? (*The workman hammers loudly.*) I say what have they got in there? (*The workman pounds away, whistling, "Everybody works but father!"*) What have they filled it with—the Ark, you know?

Second Loaf. (*mildly, his hand to his ear*). What is it?

Second Cit. (*in a shriek, while the workman pounds*). What have they got in there, I say,—what are they going to have in the Ark?

Second Loaf. (*grinning*). Oh, animals and feed and tools and—

John S. (*coming forward politely*). They've got

two of every kind of animal—every single kind of animal they is on earth. We've been three weeks a-loadin' 'em, an' they aint all in yit.

First Cit. (*looking him over coldly*). "We?" How did you get in this, sonny?

John S. (*unabashed*). I mean Mr. Noah has,—him and the boys. I run errants an' feed the animals wot they furgit. They is a good many animals.

Third Cit. (*sitting down on a box and whistling idly*). You bet there are. We can't sleep nights for the animals tramping past.

Second Cit. What, do they load 'em at night?

First Cit. They have to, the people roared so about the dust. They've had two injunctions served on them for keeping a nuisance.

John S. (*wistfully regarding the Ark*). It's jes' like a circus,—effants, 'oscrouses—everything but a cally-hope! Gosh, I wisht I could go!

Second Cit. Can't you swim?

John S. (*resentfully*). Of course I kin swim. Wot yer take me for?

(*Enter a messenger, hastily.*)

Mess. (*about winded*). Where Mr. Noah?

First Cit. (*winking at the others*). He's uptown buying an umbrella. There's going to be an awful rain, and he catches cold if he gets wet. What do you want with him?

Second Cit. (*pointing to the Ark*). He's in there, kid, currying the camels.

John S. (*eagerly*). He aint no sich thing! Mr. Noah started fer home jes' as I come.

Second Loaf. Ham's in the Ark. Will he do?

Mess. No, I must see Mr. Noah hisseff. Telegram fer him.

First Loaf. (*lounging up*). Mr. Noah's behind the Boat there. The snakes got loose, it seems.

John S. (instantly alert). Come on, I'll show yer! I seed them snakes a-comin' loose! I tole Mr. Noah them boxes would n't hold! I tole him! (*goes in great excitement, dragging the reluctant messenger*).

Second Cit. Somebody ought to lock him up. His belfry's full of bats!

Third Cit. Whose? The kid's?

Second Cit. No, Mr. Noah's. The idea of a man of his brains going off at such a tangent! (*A low, horrible roar comes from the Ark.*) What's that?

First Loaf. Only the tigers. I guess they aint got used to it yet.

Second Cit. Tigers! Think of being penned up with tigers and hippotomuses! The whole outfit will die,—the old flat-bottom's air-tight, is n't it?

First Cit. (*stumbling about, trying to see under the gangway*). They're going to use condensed air, they say. That's the talk about town.

Third Cit. (*with a disdainful sniff*). I reckon they are,—petrified air!

Second Loaf. (*nodding thoughtfully*). Mighty risky deal!

First Loaf. (*earnestly scanning the sky*). But what if it *does* rain?

First Cit. (*wheeling upon him sharply*). Why, it'll be a long wet spell! It has rained before and it will rain after, in all probability. (*stands aside for a man-servant, who staggers under a load of pillows*). Are you afraid? Get a life-preserver, and bluff it out, man! Why don't you offer to work your passage? Go with the animals—they're all dead-head.

Third Cit. Nobody but Noahs are allowed on board, but you might negotiate with the Admiral—

(*Enter a small messenger, with two big, flat paste-board boxes.*)

Mess. (*wiping his forehead*). Perfesser Noah here?—

First Cit. (affably). No, the Elect are hiding out. What you got?

Mess. (putting down the boxes). Where is he? (*A loud roar comes from the Ark, then another, and another.*) What's that?

Second Loaf. Them's the lions. They fight all the time.

Mess. (shying behind the First Citizen). Can they get out? How many are there? Who's got 'em? My eye, what a racket!

First Cit. (turning around). No, boy, they're done up in cotton. What have you got for Professor Noah?

Mess. (still hiding behind him). Butterflies,—butterflies on pins.

Third Cit. Butterflies! Come off! (*More roars from the restive animals.*)

Mess. (shying behind the Third Citizen). Yes they are. Is them lions caged, honest?

Third Cit. How do I know? Ask the Admiral. I am not on the Committee of Internal Arrangements. Are the butterflies dead?

Mess. Dead as a nit, and spiked on pins.

First Loaf. (approaching the boxes). Where did you get them?

Mess. (taking up the boxes). You let them boxes alone. Perfesser Jehu sent 'em for the Muzeum. They're to be preserved on the Ark,—spec'mans. Is any of the Noahs here, I said?

(*Enter John Smith, running.*)

John S. (to the workman, who has been explaining things, in back-ground pantomime, all the time, to divers inquiring citizens). We kaint ketch the snakes! The bow constructor is gittin' away! Mr. Noah says bring yer hammer quick! (*The workman clatters out.*)

Mess. (nodding curtly). Hello, Shiner!

John S. (absently). Hello, Yallerlegs!

Mess. (loftily). Where's Mr. Noah?

John S. (beginning to swagger). He's 'round on the other side, a-ketchin' snakes. He made the boxes hisseff, an' they aint big enough. We tole him so, me an' Ham, but he said he guessed he was makin' them boxes. What yer got?

Mess. (loftily). Butterflies.

John S. Not mutch yer aint! The butterflies is all loaded. They're in Ham's wife's bandbox.

Mess. But these is dead ones.

John S. Not mutch yer don't! We aint a-loadin' nothin' dead.

Mess. (right royally). Yer don't say! How long hev you owed this Ark, Shiner Smith? These is back-terolligal spec'mans.

John S. (largely). Oh, that's different. Why did n't yer say so? Come on, bring 'em in. *(The boys start up the gangway.)* Oh Ham! Oh Ham!

(HAM NOAH appears on the gangway, tying knots in a rope that trails after him.)

Ham. (to the intense, but furtive interest of the bystanders). "Who calls so loud?" Well, Shiner, is it you? What's the row?

John S. (guilelessly). Here's a man with butterflies. Shall I bring him in?

Ham. No, thank you. We makes our own butterflies. *(turns to go in).* Tell him to go to.

John S. But these is back-terror-olligal spec'mans.

Ham. (grinning) Which?

Mess. (hurrying toward Ham). These is backter-olligal spec'mans fer Perfesser Shem Noah, B. S.,—that's wot it reads. *(holds up one of the boxes).*

Ham. Oh, you're the "man," are you?

Mess. Yessir.

Ham. Glad to meet you, but you must go to Perfesser Shem Noah, Blunderin' Skate., on all matters of science. *(He turns, and goes up the gangway.)*

John S. (*gazing after him longingly*). Gosh, I wisht I could go in there! —Come on, Yellerlegs, you kin give 'em to Mr. Noah hisself. He is the Captain of this Boat. (*The disappointed boys go out, with the boxes.*)

Second Loaf. (*respectfully touching his hat to the Third Citizen*). What do they want with dead butterflies?

Third Cit. I suppose old Prof. Jehu wants to keep his collection dry. Well, so long, fellow citizens. This is n't tending to business. I've a heap to do before the Big Rain. (*He goes, grinning.*)

Second Cit. They say that Professor Jehu has predicted this Flood for years.

First Cit. (*carelessly*). So they say, so they say. And a high-brow down at the Institute has written a book about it. He says it'll be a local affair.

Second Cit. Who says,—Jehu?

First Cit. (*with an air of off-hand erudition*). No, the high-brow. It seems there have been a whole lot of Floods in history, and each nation claims that its Flood was universal. Whereas they've only been heavy rains,—destroyed the crops and floated the roofs, and that sort of thing.

First Loaf. Does Mr. Noah know about them other Floods?

Second Loaf. (*anxiously*). How does he know there have been a lot of Floods?

First Cit. Oh, he's a sort of antiquarian,—digs in the dead languages, you know, and drags up things that sensible people have forgotten. That's about all they do at the Institute,—dig among dead roots and things, and write books about 'em. And the books are deader than the roots, by a long sight. (*sighing*). Well, if the Flood is only "a local affair," the Noahs will never get out of town. It'll take a deal of rain to float that aggregation!

(*Enter a messenger, with a small wooden box.*)

Well, son, what you got? (*They crowd around the messenger.*)

Mess. (*a fearsome youngster*). I want ter see—do you know,—I—I mean I want to speak to—(*sees the Ark*). Oh, is that it?

First Cit. (*kindly*). Yes, sonny, that is It. What have you got to contribute?

Mess. (*staring earnestly at the Ark*). Do you think it'll hold 'em all right?

Second Cit. Hold 'em? Hold 'em tight as a bottle. What have you got to seal up?

(*Enter JOHN SMITH, whistling.*)

Mess. (*gazing at the Ark*). I got horned toads.

John S. (*pausing to hitch up a broken galloos*). Mister Noah aint goin' ter buy no more horned toads. He says he's seen 'nough horned toads ter fill a tub. That's wot he said,—ter fill a tub.

Mess. (*his awed gaze still on the Ark*). He advertised fer some.

John S. Yessir, he did, but he's got a-plenty. You'd better go 'long and not worrit him. The snakes is loose.

Mess. (*tremblingly*). What did you say?

John S. I said the snakes wuz loose. We're tryin' to ketch 'em now.

Mess. (*after one speechless gasp*). Snakes! The snakes is loose! (*He dashes out, wildly.*)

John S. (*scornfully*). He's 'fraid of snakes! Well, I'll be doggonned!

(*Enter JENNIE and MATILDA, carrying a small trunk. They get as far as the foot of the gangway, and stop, tuckered out.*)

Jennie. Don't pull so! Let's rest a minute. (*They put it down.*) My, I'm tired. (*The Loafers, embarrassed, pretend to be vastly interested in the Ark.*)

First Cit. (*with much courtesy*). Can I be of any assistance to you, ladies?

Jennie. (*hastily snatching the towel off her head*). No, I think not; thank you just as much. It really is n't heavy, but the men are busy, and we are n't nearly ready to go, and this trunk is very important.

Second Cit. (*affably*). Naturally, Madam. When do you expect to sail, Madam?

Jennie. (*tidying her hair in some confusion*). We—we enter the Ark today, and we will sail when—when—

Matilda. (*gravely*). When it rains.

Second Cit. (*bowing*). Naturally, Madam.

First Cit. That will be—er—delightful, Mrs. Noah, delightful. (*The two men-servants cross into the Ark with clattering kitchen tins.*) You seem to be making your new home comfortable.

Jennie. (*springing up from the trunk*). Oh my goodness, I forget to tell Mamma about that gasoline! What if she puts it near the matches? (*She hurries out.*)

First Cit. (*to Matilda*). I was about to remark that you seem to be making your new home comfortable. I trust that you will have a pleasant sail.

Matilda. (*getting up with awkward expedition*). Yes, thank you, I—I hope so too. We—I mean I—I had better go see about the cellar windows. One cannot trust to servants in these matters. (*She goes in embarrassed haste.*)

Second Cit. (*bowing to her retreating back*). Naturally, Madam, (*to First Citizen*). Seems to be a strenuous living all around. Even the women are agile.

(*Enter MRS. NOAH, a dusting cap awry on her head, her gown tucked up, her arms full of bed linens, which she keeps dropping as she walks.*)

First Cit. (*picking up a pillow case*). Permit me, Madam.

Mrs. N. (*turning, drops a sheet*). Thank you. Thank you. Do you know where Mr. Noah is, my good man? Thank you.

First Cit. (stiffly, but picking up things politely). No, Mrs. Noah, I am not informed as to the Admiral's whereabouts. Permit me.

Second Cit. (also assisting). Permit me, Mrs. Noah.

Mrs. N. (smiling wearily). Thank you. Thank you. I am in such a hurry, and these things did n't get packed somehow. Everything must be aboard by 3 o'clock, positively, Mr. Noah says. There are always so many things to do at the last minute.

Second Cit. Naturally, Madam.

First Loaf. (taking off his shabby hat). Are the animals—packed?

Mrs. N. (arranging the linens on her arm). Yes, the animals are all fixed, nice and comfortable. Hammie says they fit like cobblestones. *(The two serving men come down the gangway.)* Adam and James, have you brought the dining-room chairs?

Adam. (dismally). Yessum. *(James nods three times.)*

Mrs. N. And the little green wash bench,—the one that stood in the corner of the summer kitchen? And the kitchen tins? And the clothes-wringer?

Adam. (with a dismal nod at each separate question). Yessum. *(James nods three times.)*

Mrs. N. (sitting down on the trunk). And Flossy's rocker and the porch cushions? And the empty fruit jars? And the soft soap? And the clothes pins?

Adam. (nodding, like an automaton). Yessum.

James. (gulping hard). Yes, Ma'am.

Mrs. N. (wiping her eyes on her gingham apron). And you locked the basement door? *(Adam nods, speechless with woe. James looks unutterable devotion, sniffing slightly).* All right, you may go now, Adam and James. Be good men; never tell a lie, and be careful about the east windows. *(She extends her hand to each in turn.)* Goodbye, Adam and James.

Adam. (backing away blindly). You'll take us, won't you?

James. (*sniffing*). You bean't goin' to leave us behind?

Mrs. N. (*sadly but firmly*). Go back to the house, Adam and James, and be sure and close the front blinds. (*Adam and James fall upon each other's necks, and blubber loudly.*) Go home, Adam and James,—go home and feed the chickens. (*Adam and James, clinging to each other, stagger out, to the profound commiseration of the Loafers. Mrs. Noah, still weeping softly, tries to unlock the trunk; John Smith, carelessly vigilant, hovers near her.*) Why, the lock's broken! And they left an unlocked trunk here! It was very dangerous! Everything might have been stolen! I suppose they were tired; it's been a hard day for all of us. (*She lifts the lid, then the tray lid, and takes out a palm-leaf fan.*) A palm-leaf fan! Well, I'll declare, those girls! And Matilda is so great on system! (*Takes out the tray, and places it on the ground.*) I'll just put this in here. (*She sorts the linen busily.*) It will be easy enough to sort these things after we start.

John S. Kin I do anything for you, Mrs. Noah? It's pretty tough on you women.

Mrs. N. (*opening a sheet to line the trunk.*) No, Johnnie Smith, you can not help, but you are a good-hearted little boy.

John S. Yessum.

Mrs. N. You have helped us a good deal. Papa says he does n't know (*she leans in the trunk*) what we would have done without you. I hope that you will—(*She leans in the trunk again.*)

Voice from the Ark. Oh Mamma! Oh Mamma!

Mrs. N. (*emerging from the trunk*). I hope that you will grow up into a good man. You must never tell lies, and always be good to the poor.

John S. (*wistfully*). Yessum. (*He gazes at Mrs. Noah thoughtfully, and at the trunk more thoughtfully.*) Yessum.

Voice. Oh Mamma! (*Ham comes down the gang-way a few steps.*)

John S. Ham's a-callin' you, Mrs. Noah.

Ham. (*advancing down the gangway*). I don't know where you women want the pantry shelves. You'd better come right away, and show me.

Mrs. N. Yes, Hammie, I'm coming. You watch these things, Johnnie Smith. (*She goes into the Ark with Ham, furtively watched by the Citizens and Loafers.*)

John S. (*absently, gazing at the trunk*). Yes, Ma'am. (*He edges nearer and nearer the trunk.*) She hates to go on the Ark—hates to like a dog. They all do. I gotter a noshun ter ast Mr. Noah ter let me go with 'em. This trunk aint locked, an' it's empty. Gosh, if I could git in there somehow! If I could git in there somehow!

(*Enter SHEM NOAH, lugging a snake box. He falls over something; the lid of the box falls off. Consternation seizes some of the bystanders; others try to assist him.*)

John S. (*solus*) If I wuz in there onct! 'Taint locked; the animals is all tied. I dassant ast Mr. Noah. (*He wraps himself in a sheet, hastily, crawls into the trunk, and snaps to the lid.*)

Shem. (*recovering himself and the box*). I thank you, gentlemen. I thank you.

First Cit. Did you get your butterflies?

Shem. (*mopping his brow*). Butterflies,—what butterflies? I have no butterflies.

(*Enter THE ADMIRAL, in his shirt sleeves, carrying a small box and a saw.*)

Second Cit. (*gravely*). Pleasant day, Mr. Noah. No suggestion of rain.

Mr. Noah. (*walking straight ahead, and looking ditto*). Take those snakes in, Shem. Immediately. This is no place for this trunk. Whose is it? Who left it here? And the tray left out? Could n't they leave something else to stumble over? If somebody would do something—

Shem. (standing still on the gangway, mutiny written all over him). Do something? Do something! A man is only a man, I guess. What do you expect? If for eight weeks I have n't worked like a Pyramid builder—

Mr. N. (impatiently). Will you move on? Don't block the gangway. Stand and argue and argue and argue! This snake weighs a ton! Itemize your bill after we're afloat. Move on, will you? (Shem grins, and goes into the Ark.) Everybody stops to talk. It's too bad this is n't a sailing vessel, we'll have so much good wind on board! (He sees the pile of linen that Mrs. Noah has abandoned.) The bed linen here, of all places! Talk about system! Women have no more idea of system than so many guinea pigs! (He opens the trunk tray.) A palm-leaf fan!

Second Cit. (affectionately). Did you get your telegram, Mr. Noah?

Mr. N. (majesterially). If I did, the contents concern me. (He starts up the gangway, pauses, returns to the trunk, nad attempts to open it. While he is struggling with it, Ham saunters down the gangway, whistling impeturbably.) Here, Ham, take this trunk in. We won't be ready to start for a year at this rate. Go on, I'll bring the tray myself. Nobody does anything but whistle! (Ham drags the trunk up the gangway, whistling imperturbably.) I'll have to put this stuff away; the women will never think of it again. (He puts the linen in the tray, then assays to take the saw, the box and the tray; fails, and goes, gravely, and with dignity, without the tray.)

Second Cit. This is the Admiral's busy day.

First Cit. "Everybody works but father!" (Ham comes down the gangway, and takes up the tray, the crowd yelling, variously; "Speech! Speech! Speech!" "Good day for ducks!" Do you think she'll float?" "You are the people!" "Life Preservers are up!")

Second Cit. And yet, after all, the situation is not without pathos.

(Enter Flossy, in disordered dress, carrying a mirror and several men's coats. The crowd is respectfully silent until she has entered the Ark.)

Second Loaf. If they do think there's going to be a Flood, they're a mighty stingy outfit!

Second Loaf. That's what they are!

(Enter ADAM, carrying a small blue enamel saucepan. He look about fearfully.)

First Cit. Go on, man, the animals are caged.

Adam. (tremblingly). I—I dassant.

Second Cit. (going to him). What did you come back for?

Adam. (sniffing). To give Mrs. Noah her s-s-stewpan. She always makes her p-p-porridge in this p-p-pan.

First Loaf. (with acute sympathy). Take it to her. She'll be glad to have it. She's in the Ark.

Adam. (breaking down). I won't never see her ergin.....never ergin! She's allus been good to me, and this is her s-s-stewpan!

(Enter hastily, JAPHETH, with one arm in a sling, and accompanied by MATILDA and JENNIE, carrying various domestic impedimenta.)

Japh. (severely). Adam, you're a baby. —Go on, girls, get under cover. (They go in, with the best speed they can make, being much encumbered.)

Adam. (clinging to Japheth). Take me wid yer, p-please, Mr. Japheth! I'll serve you faithful! Take me wid yer!

Japh. (desperately). Take him away, somebody! Take him away! This is too much! (Adam is tenderly led out by the *Second Loafer*, and a bystander.) Farewell, base world! Here goes nothin'! (He dashes up the gangway.)

First Cit. (with awe). That's the last of them, is n't it?

First Loaf. Where's Shem?

First Cit. He's in there; don't you know, he had the snakes. Everybody is aboard.

First Loaf. What time is it?

First Cit. (*consulting his watch*). Five minutes to three. There's Ham! (*Ham walks gravely down the gangway, picking up things; pauses, looks at the sky, the fields, wishfully, then goes in, slowly, his head down.*)

Second Cit. (*sighing in unconscious sympathy*). Yes, it's pretty tough. Now all they need is rain. (*There is an instant's silence, then a heavy creaking and pounding.*) What's that? Listen! (*Mr. Noah's voice is heard in steady command; "Easy now. Easy! Take hold higher up, there, Shem! Easy! Further to the left, Ham! Let her go! Let her go!"*) There goes the gangplank! (*It falls to the ground.*) They're off! (*There succeeds a deep rumbling noise.*) Thunder? By George, not thunder? (*looks up anxiously*).

First Cit. Look, look, the door! Man, they're shutting it! They're shutting the door! (*The heavy rumbling continues.*)

First Loaf. (*taking off his hat and bowing his head*). The last of the Noahs.

Second Cit. (*as the slow rumbling grows fainter*). It's suicide! (*takes off his hat*).

First Loaf. Or murder!

First Cit. Or both! (*As he speaks, the faint rumbling dies quite away.*)

(*The curtain falls on the three men standing as if a funeral were passing.*)

ACT II

(The Afternoon of the Twentieth Day Out. The main hallway of the Ark, a dusty, murky space, devoted to empty boxes and barrels, and general disorder. This space is dimly lighted by one discouraged wall-candle. On one side, unseen, are animal stalls and cages—unseen but not unfelt!)

(Enter JOHN SMITH, cautiously, barefooted and ragged.)

John S. *(as he snoops about, looking for something)*. If I could fin' a candle!.....It's awful dark, but at night they put out the candles, an' I kaint see ter git 'round a tall! I gotter be keerful in the daytime; they is allus somebody somewheres. They is a good many Noahs. *(listens)*. You kin never tell what you'll meet next on this 'ere Boat; maybe a tiger, maybe a 'ouserous. *(A four-footed beast is heard approaching.)* I'll bet that's Old Calico! He's allus a-snoopin' 'round. *(The four-footed beast passes him dimly in the gloom.)* Old Calico. I knowed it wuz him. *(He prowls around, peering anxiously into barrels and boxes.)* I dunno how long we been sailin'. Maybe it's a hundred years. I'll never tell yer! *(Some snarls and growls come from the neighboring Animal Exhibit.)* Them's the tigers. They fight a good deal; seems like they kaint git used to the dark. *(A series of blood-curdling growls filter through the gloom.)* Gee, if one of them 'uld git loose I would n't las' a minute! I would n't make a good bite fur that bigges' tiger!.....I gotter have somepin to eat! If I could fin' a candle fer tonight I'd be all right. *(listening and looking)*. There comes Mr. Noah. He's lookin' fer me. He's allus lookin' fe me. I got him guessin'. *(He hides behind a barrel.)* He'd be skeered ter death if he did fin' me. *(Mr. Noah comes in, lantern in hand; he peers around carefully, listens, then goes out, his lantern held high. John Smith comes out cautiously.)* The other night he almost ketched me. He wuz as clost as this. They all suspicion me, even the women. I'll have

ter swipe a piece off'n this candle. (*He climbs upon a barrel, and takes the candle out of its holder. Footsteps are heard approaching, and in fright he blows out the candle.*)

(*Enter MATILDA and JENNIE, carrying candles.*)

Matilda. (*squinting narrowly around*). It's our duty, you see, to hunt till we find this—this person.

Jennie. Yes, we got to. Listen! It seems to me I hear somebody breathing.

Matilda. (*after an intense listening*). I guess not. I don't hear a thing.

Jennie. (*sitting down on a nail keg*). I'm tired all the time. I suppose it's the strain, expecting to find something, you don't know what. Are you going to tell Father? After all, we don't know anything for sure.

Matilda. (*sternly, suspending her wary search*). Why don't we know? We hear strange footsteps; the candles are stolen from their holders; Ham says that they can't possibly burn out so fast,—they must be stolen. Every night things are taken from the refrigerator. Mamma thinks it's the monkeys. You know it is n't the monkeys. So do I.

Jennie. (*with a shudder*). Maybe it's ghosts.

Matilda. (*scornfully*). Ghosts don't eat meat and potatoes, I guess. And they don't steal candles and break dishes. It is n't ghosts and it is n't monkeys; I know that; you know that. No sir, somebody sneaked aboard this Boat that last day, when we were n't looking. I feel it in my bones. You wait. You'll see.

Jennie. It almost makes me sick. Do you think Father knows? (*Sounds from the Animal Exhibit.*)

Matilda. (*peering into things, slowly and cautiously*). Listen to those dreadful animals. They get worse every day. I think he suspects.

Jennie. (*with a gasp of horror*). Oh, you do! Did he say so?

Matilda. (*reaching into a barrel*). Of course not.

He'd rather die than let any one know. But he keeps looking over his shoulder all the time, and when anything falls he jumps as if it were a pistol shot.

Jennie. It will kill him. He'll never be able to stand it in the world.

Matilda. (*coming mighty near John Smith in her search*). He's got to stand it. We all have. Why, the wall candle's out! I declare! Now what do you know about that? Do you suppose the monkeys did *that*? Of course there is somebody aboard this Boat; there's no question about it. I'll light it again. (*Lifting her candle high, she starts for it. John Smith scrambles softly down in the darkness.*) Listen! What's that?

Jennie. Go over and see. You're nearest.

Matilda. (*standing like a wooden woman*). I—I guess it is n't anything. What did it sound like to you?

Jennie. (*with a giggle of pure nerves*). It sounded like a—a person, for all the world. Would n't it be funny if we'd find him? I would be scared to death. (*An intense pause succeeds.*) Are n't you scared, honest?

Matilda. (*with confidence*). I am not afraid of anything on this Boat.

Jennie. (*with manifest admiration*). You are n't? Not tigers?

Matilda. The tigers are all in cages, goosey.

Jennie. (*snuffing the candle she holds*). Are n't you afraid of snakes?

Matilda. No, I don't like snakes, but I am not afraid of them. (*In the adjacent darkness, John Smith knocks something down.*)

Jennie. (*starting up*). There, I told you! There is somebody there!

Matilda. Listen! (*More muffled noise in the darkness*). Is—is anybody there? (*weakly*). I say, is—is anybody there? Please answer. Answer me, Sir!

Jennie. (*clinging to her*). Hush, he might shoot us! Can you see anything? Let's call the boys.

Matilda. (firmly). We know you are there. Please answer. Is anybody there? (*They both peer into the darkness whence comes the noise.*)

Jennie. Tell him if he will answer we will not tell Father on him,—nor anybody.

Matilda. If you will answer, we will—we will protect with our lives. . . . Is anybody there? (*John Smith growls a big, lion-like growl.*)

Jennie. Tigers! Tigers! Good Heavens, they're loose! (*She flees into the outer darkness, leaving her forgotten candle on the floor by the nail keg.*)

Matilda. (after a frozen stare into the darkness). Wait for me! (*She stumbles, regains her balance, and flees, crying, "Wait for me! Wait for me!"*)

John S. (coming boldly into the arc of light cast by Jennie's candle). That skeert 'em all right. Women is awful cowards. I'm gettin' so I kin growl ter beat the tigers themselves. Pertect me with their lives! I have a fotygraph of their doin' jes' that thing! You bet I do steal things from the 'frigerator. Only Mrs. Noah she puts out the kitching candles, an' I kaint fin' the 'frigerator. (*He takes up the candle from the floor.*) Women is awful cowards.

A Voice. Oh Japh!

John S. That's Ham. He suspicions me too. (*turns towards the Voice, wistfully*). I gotter noshun ter let him ketch me, I'm so blame hongrey!

The Voice. Is that you, Japh?

John S. (still wistfully). Ham's a good feller. He'd treat me white. No, I dassant. He'd tell Mr. Noah. (*He extinguishes the candle, and steals behind a barrel, very softly.*)

(*Enter HAM, from the opposite direction, candle in hand.*)

Ham. Where are you? I say, Japh, where are you? Why, I thought Japh was here! Hello, is anybody here? "Stand and deliver!" "Your money or your life!" (*picks up Matilda's candle*). What's this?

Matilda's candle. You can track the women by the candles they lose. Candles instead of hairpins. The world do move.....I thought Japh was here; I certainly heard somebody. I must be getting the jimmies.

(Enter, *SHEM*, candle in hand.)

Is that you, Japh? Hello! Hello! Is that you, Japh?

Shem. No, it's me. What are you yelling about? Anything loose?

Ham. Not that I know of. I thought you were Japh.

Shem. Well hardly. You must be blind.

Ham. (looking about uneasily). We'll all be as blind as moles if we live in this gloom much longer. Where's Japh?

Shem. I thought he was here.

Ham. (nervously). Why?

Shem. (frowning heavily). I thought I heard him. How long have you been here?

Ham. About a thousand years. Why?

Shem. (looking behind him). You shoot off that "Why?" like a pop-gun. Calm yourself. I only thought I heard—

Ham. (irritably). So did I!

Shem. (eagerly). What did you hear?

Ham. (sitting down wearily on the nail keg). I give it up! What did you?

Shem. (upsetting things in his blundering search among the barrels). I don't know.

Ham. For heaven's sake, stop that racket! Let things alone!

Shem. Let them alone yourself. I'm not asking you to pick them up, am I?

Ham. What are you looking for?

Shem. (banging around indefinitely). I wish I knew! (He upsets something else.)

Ham. Stop that, I said. Sit down, like a decent white man.

Shem. (*wheeling on him wrathfully*). You're as nervous as an old woman! What were you looking for?

Ham. When?

Shem. Just now.

Ham. Where?

Shem. Here—when I came in, a minute ago.

Ham. (*serenely*). Nothin'. I was going to feed the elephants.

Shem. (*pettishly*). Going to feed the elephants in your eye! They were fed two hours ago, and you know it. You were hunting something. (*There is some confusion among the neighboring animals, under cover of which John Smith steals to another barrel.*) What's that?

Ham. (*essaying an impressive yawn*). Talk about a pop-gun! You act like a hair-trigger! That's only the hyenas.

Shem. (*hunting among the barrels, noisily*). Well, that's enough. They're probably fighting. They never say die. I admire their pluck. Have you another candle? (*Ham produces one. John Smith steals out very softly.*) Hark! What's that?

Ham. (*cutting his extra candle in two*). It is the rain, my dear Professor. "The rain, it raineth every day." What's the matter with you? Cheer up. All is not lost. This is only an experiment. There is land, you know, somewhere, sometime.

Shem. (*in a half-whisper*). Did n't you hear that—that step?

Ham. You're all ears. Why don't you rent yourself out for your acoustic properties?

Shem. (*coming quite close to his brother*). Ham, I want to tell you something, but don't say anything about it. After all, it may be just my suspicion. I've been wanting to tell you for some time, but there is always somebody around. I am convinced that there is, aboard this Boat—

Ham. (*rising, and edging away*). Don't tell me.

Keep it dark. Wait till we get ashore, and tell a policeman.

Shem. I've got to tell somebody, and I'd rather tell you. I am convinced, as I was about to say, that there is, aboard this Ark—

Ham. (*edging clear of him*). Thank you, Professor. I feel the honor, but really I would rather not know. Keep it to yourself. "Go bury thy sorrows."

Shem. (*looking absently into the distant darkness*). I wish I could! But you ought to know the facts, so we can decide upon some course of action.

Ham. No, keep it to yourself. It's too—too hideous.

Shem. (*startled*). What's hideous? What are you talking about?

Ham. (*taking up his candle and starting out*). The same thing you are. I won't stand for it.

(*Enter JAPHETH, slowly, with a large dark-lantern.*)
Hello, Japh, what are you shadowing,—a horse-thief?

Japh. (*turning the bull's-eye full upon Ham*). I thought I heard somebody—

Ham. (*backing off*). Quit that! I have n't stolen anything. Here's your party; gentleman on my left.

Shem. You heard that lantern, maybe. "Though silent, it yet speaketh." Why don't you use a drum?

Japh. (*solemnly*). I thought I heard something.

Shem. (*severely regarding him*). You probably did.

Japh. (*more solemnly*). I tell you I thought I heard something.

Shem. And I tell you that you probably did.

Japh. I thought I heard—

Ham. So did I.

Japh. (*looking around fearfully*). What did you hear?

Ham. What did you?

Japh. (*wiping his forehead*). I don't know. I—I thought—it was—a—I mean the jaguar.

Ham. Shut off that fool lantern!

Shem. No, you did n't think it was the jaguar. You knew it was n't that versatile brute. We caught him yesterday. You were there. What's the use of lying?

Japh. (*on a still hunt with his lantern*). Nobody's lyin'. Who are you? I guess I know what I'm talking about. (*to Ham*). How long have you been here? (*He falls over something, stumblingly.*)

Ham. (*jumping about a foot*). Keep still, you clumsy guy! There's nothing there. And shut off that fool lantern! It gives me the highstrikes!

Japh. (*facing them angerily*). Well, then, have the highstrikes! Nobody cares what you have, or how long you have it! It's so blame dark that a fellow can't see where he's going! How long have you been here, I said?

Ham and Shem. (*with full concert effect*). Why?

Japh. When you came was—was—that is, did you hear anything? And have you moved anything? (*The four-footed beast pads in, slowly, in the gloom.*) What's that? (*He grabs Ham's arm violently.*) Ham, what's that?

Shem. (*staring*). What is that?

Ham. (*raising his candle*). Be still! (*The four-footed beast lunges lazily past, into the outer darkness.*) What do you see?

Shem. (*with a keen in-take of breath*). It's only Old Calico. The old slouch is loose again. I thought—

Ham. (*wriggling away from Japheth's clutch*). Ouch! Let go my arm!

Japh. (*sinking on a box*). That was horrible—horrible! I'm—I'm all upset.

Ham. (*nursing his bruised arm*). I suspected as much, my son.

Shem. (*with a gusty sigh*). So am I. I'm on my last legs. I'll dance and yell if this thing is n't stopped.

Japh. (*moping his neck and brow*). What, you got 'em, too?

Ham. (to Shem). What do you mean?

Shem. (dismally). You know what I mean. We all know what we mean, and we all mean the same thing. I can't stand it any longer. Look at Japh. He's positively getting wild-eyed.

Ham. (lifting his candle, the better to scan Japheth's face). He sure is; looks like a scared Brownie.

Japh. (gazing at Ham with melancholy earnestness). I'm getting pop-eyed looking into corners. Everywhere I go, I—I keep looking for something that is n't there. It's got on my nerves. I can't eat; I can't sleep; I chase 'round and 'round this bloomin' Boat like a pinwheel! I've caught my death of cold being out in the night air. (with a melancholy snicker).

Ham. (lowering his candle from Japheth's face). Oh, come off! That's imagination. There's no night on this Boat, so how can there be any night air! There may be night on the outside, but. . . . I've forgotten.

Japh. Well, anyway, I'd give ten dollars for an hour's sleep.

Shem. So would I, a sleep unbroken by visions, as it were.

Ham. (cheerfully). You fellows have the jimjams. It's all imagination. Shut off that lantern, and think of the fellows on the outside.

Japh. I can't think of them. It's worse than—than thinking of the fellows on the inside. (There succeeds a distressful silence, occupied by the animals only.)

Ham. (slowly). Listen to those wretched animals! They manage to keep up an interest. Did you ever hear such a touse! No wonder we all have the creeps!

Japh. (to Ham). What do you think it is?

Ham. I don't think. I can't stand the pressure. Go bathe your head.

Japh. (nodding a great many times, solemnly). I think.

Shem. So do I. I've been thinking for a long time.

Ham. (rising with a determined air). It's only suspicion. You can't prove anything.

Japh. You mean we can't *catch* anything.

Ham. (starting out). I mean that you fellows are working your imagination overtime. After all, what do you *know*?

Japh. (reluctantly). Well, nothing—as yet.

Ham. Then don't go snooping around as if you were conversing with spirits. Tuck in your nerves and go to sleep. It's a long yet time to land. (They are silent, looking steadfastly at each other, Ham standing, candle in hand.)

(Enter FLOSSY, carrying a candle, her skirts held daintily.)

Flossy. (runs plump into Ham). Oh my goodness, how you scared me!

Ham. (picking up her candle). Then look where you are going.

Flossy. Oh, how you frightened me! I'm trembling all over!

Shem. Sit down, my dear. (She does so, on a soap box.)

Ham. (wheeling on her suspiciously). What are you trembling for?

Flossy. Because I am frightened. Why?

Ham. I mean, what are you looking for?

Flossy. I am not looking for anything. I was going to give the monkeys some peanuts.

Ham. Yes, you were going to feed the monkeys! Why don't you 'fess up?

Flossy. I was. Here are the peanuts. How queer you all look! Is anything the matter?

Shem. Oh, no, everything is lovely. "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile!"

Ham. (chants). "It's all serene as a canned sardine That was canned at the seige of Troy."

Flossy. I'm glad you think it's lovely. I don't. It's so dark you're afraid to move, and you never know what you'll meet around the corners.

Shem. (*grabbing her by the arm*). What do you mean? What do you expect to meet, in Adam's name?

Flossy. Don't hold my arm so tight. It hurts awfully. Why, I mean there are so many queer noises, and the animals are always coming loose, and—(*There is a terrific crash of falling things without.*) Oh, my goodness, what's that?

Ham. Cages down! I suppose the baboon is holding a soiree! Come on, you fellows! That means first aid to the injured! (*He dashes out.*) Come on! (*Another crash is heard, and a few choice snarls and growls.*)

Shem. Nothing monotonous about this life! One continuous round of gaiety! Japh, you take Flossy back to the sitting-room. (*He goes, to a chorus of snarls.*)

Japh. (*drawing a keg near Flossy's box, and sitting down thereupon*). Were n't you looking for somebody now, honest?

Flossy. How funny you look—as if your eyes would pop if you winked them! Honest, I was n't! Hope to die! I was going to feed the monkeys. See? (*She holds up a paper sack.*)

Japh. Then you don't know anything about this?

Flossy. Which? What is the matter with you? Everybody is so queer. It's like being penned up with crazy people to live with you men.

Japh. Well, maybe I am crazy. I hope I am. Anyway, how many people are there on this Boat?

Flossy. (*wonderingly*). Eight, of course. Eight Noahs.

Japh. Why of course?

Flossy. (*edging away from him*). Are you sick? You look so spooky.

Japh. Never mind how I look. How many people are there on this Boat?

Flossy. Is it a riddle?

Japh. Riddle nothin'! Just wait until I show you. Can you keep a secret? (*He adjusts the dark-lantern.*)

Flossy. Oh, is there a secret? Of course I can. Go on, tell me.

Japh. This is a pretty solemn sort of secret. Do you swear not to tell?

Flossy. Never. Cross my heart and hope to die.

Japh. You won't tell Father, nor—nor anybody?

Flossy. I did n't tell when you bribed Josh Robinson to vote for Father, did I?

Japh. No, you were a trump, and you must n't tell this. It would kill Father if he knew.

Flossy. (*looking around uneasily*). Go on, but—I'm awfully frightened. Are any of the animals dead? Is it the giraffe?

Japh. It's worse than that. It's worse than a graveyard full of giraffes! It's worse than anything. Wait till I show you something. That is, if I can find them. (*He searches the dusty floor carefully with his lantern.*) Here they are, by George! I knew it! I knew it! Come here.

Flossy. (*starting up*). I'd rather not. I'm going away.

Japh. Oh, come on. You said you would. I want to tell you about it. You're always a good fellow.

Flossy. I don't want to see. I'm afraid, and that old lantern is so dreadful, and you look so snoopy!

Japh. (*taking her by the arm*). You come here. You said you would.

Flossy. (*fearfully*). W—what is it?

Japh. (*focussing the light on the floor with much care*). Look here, on the floor. See anything?

Flossy. (*bending over*). I don't see anything but dust. It's a disgrace the way you boys keep this Hall. (*She studies the lighted space with grownig interest.*) Oh, these are.....these are—what are they? Oh Japheth, what *are* they?

Japh. (*stolidly*). You tell.

Flossy. It's a little nigger's footprints—footprints, I mean.

Japh. (*bending over the footprints*). Why a little nigger's?

Flossy. (*giggling*). Because I know they are—a little nigger's footprints.

Japh. Sit down. Are you going to have hysterics?

Flossy. (*giggling*). No, of course not. I never (*a series of ripply giggles*) I never have hysterics. You know (*a ripply giggle or two*) I never do—never did in all my life. A little nigger's footprints! Is n't it funny? How did you know?

Japh. (*sternly*). Sit down.

Flossy. (*sitting down quite meekly*). Did you bring him on board?

Japh. (*studying the footprints*). Of course not. What do you take me for? He must have sneaked in that last day when we were all so busy.

Flossy. (*with a prolonged giggle*). A stowaway? Is n't that dreadful? Does anybody know but us? Where is he? Does Father know he's here? What's his name? How old is he?

Japh. (*striding up and down*). How do I know? I have n't seen him. I found these tracks about a week ago,—a week ago yesterday. You must n't tell Father.

Flossy. (*gazing at the tracks*). Of course not. It's a heap worse than leaks, is n't it?

Japh. It's worse than anything.

Flossy. Where is he?

Japh. Who? Father? In the feed-bins.

Flossy. No, the little nigger boy.

Japh. How do you know he's a nigger boy?

Flossy. You said he was.

Flossy. (*breaking down*). No, I did n't. You said so. You must have. I could n't imagine such a thing. How could I? You said he was a little nigger boy.

Japh. (resuming his weary march). Well then, I did. Don't cry. It does n't matter. I don't know what color he is. I've never seen him, I told you. But he must be pretty blue by this time.

Flossy. (looking around fearfully). Where do you suppose he stays?

Japh. (with a groan). I give it up. I give it up. But he's kept me humping. He's here every night, though.

Flossy. (with a shudder). "Here?"

Japh. In the Hall here, looking for something to eat, probably.

Flossy. What are you going to do?

Japh. (throwing out his arms). I don't know. I don't know. I wish to Heaven I did! I can't eat nor sleep. I have n't had a single happy moment since I discovered these darn tracks! I ought to catch him and throw him overboard, but I'd hate to do that. I don't want to find him, but I can't help hunting him.

Flossy. (hopefully). Maybe he'll die.

Japh. (sinking down on a box with a heart-rending sigh). I've thought of that, but he won't. He'll keep on prowling around, and some day Father'll run into him and then— *(There is a hopeless silence, punctured by some growls from the Animal Exhibit.)*

Flossy. (still not without hope). Maybe it's a girl. That would n't be so bad, would it? Let's look at the footprints again. *(They do so, long and earnestly.)* What funny toes, so short and stumpy!

Japh. They're not the toes of an aristocrat, sure. No, it's a boy. A girl could n't have stood it so long.

Flossy. (giggling). How long do you suppose he's been on the Ark?

Japh. (impatiently, rising from his examination of the tracks). As long as we have, of course. He could n't get aboard after we started, I suppose.

Flossy. No, of course not. Excuse me; I was n't thinking. *(with a light giggle).* He must have lots of

fun. Just think, he sees us and we can't see him. I wonder what he thinks of us?

Japh. (*sighing like a furnace*). He thinks we're a mighty mean outfit; everybody does.

Flossy. But we did n't save ourselves. We had to come, you know. I would have invited all the girls, if I had dared. Do you suppose he's 'fraid of the animals?

Japh. He probably is,—scared to death. Now stop giggling and tell me what to do. I thought you'd help me; you always have. I am going to hunt tonight—

Flossy. Oh, let me help you! Let me! I won't tell!

Japh. You may help in the day time, of course, but it's no work for a woman at night. Some night I'll catch him sure. It's only a matter of time. Hark, somebody's coming. Remember, mum's the word.

(*Enter MRS. NOAH, carefully, carrying a candle as if she were afraid of it.*)

Mrs. N. (*dolefully*). What are you doing, Japheth? Is it a leak?

Japh. Hello, Mamma, is that you? Taking a constitutional? I was showing Flossy the kangaroo tracks. They have the funniest feet!

Mrs. N. (*dolefully*). I do not care what sort of feet kangaroos have. I thought they walked on their tails. I am tired of the animals. Sometimes I—I almost wish there were n't any animals!

Japh. Why, Mamma, cheer up. That is a dreadful wish. If it were n't for the animals, we would be out in this pounding rain. Where are you going?

Mrs. N. I am not going any place. There is no place to go. But I get so nervous when I think of the animals that I can't stand it. (*Sniffs and peers around*). It's strange that you all like to stay up here; it is so dark and the animals smell so bad. How can you stand it? Why don't you have more candles on the wall? No³ body seems to care how dismal it is. All you think about is the animals. Where is Papa? Everybody is so—so

queer and so away all the time. (*Weeps.*) Is anything the matter? Have you had a fire?

Flossy. (*going to her*). Why, Mamma, what is it? (*She takes Mrs. Noah's candle.*) Are you sick?

Mrs. N. (*applying her handkerchief to her eyes*). I don't know. I guess I am a little homesick, maybe, and then I am worried about Papa. He acts so strangely, and he—he does n't sleep. Why, he—don't you tell, for he thinks I don't know it, but he gets up in the night to feed the animals! Is n't it terrible,—all by himself in this big lonesome Boat!

Japh. (*exchanging a fleeting glance of understanding with Flossy*). Well, we'll feed them more in the daytime. They eat their heads off, anyhow. Where are the girls?

Mrs. N. (*weeping softly*). I don't know. I don't know where anybody it. Nobody pays any attention to me. And it is so dark, and the rain pours so, and the animals smell so bad! And Papa says that we may spring a leak at any minute! I think the Ark is a d—d—dreadful place! (*She leans against Flossy, and weeps copiously.*)

Japh. Why, Mamma, I am astonished at you. Cheer up. Here we are, the only family on earth with a private yacht, on a trip around the world, with nothing to do but enjoy ourselves. It does seem to me that you might manage to take the situation more hopefully!

Mrs. N. (*weeping with unrestrained ardor*). It is so dark, and the rain pounds so, and the animals smell so bad!

Ham's Voice. (*from the Animal Exhibit*). Japh! Oh Japh! Come here! Bring a rope!

Shem's Voice. (*also from the Exhibit*). Bring a saw! Hurry up! And some nails!

Mrs. N. (*looking out from her handkerchief*). Is it the animals?

Japh. (*rising like a man who has been tired for a*

long time). Oh, yes, it's the animals. Everything is the animals!

Ham's Voice. Are you coming, Japh? Don't stop to dress your hair! The jaguar's out again!

Japh. Flossy, you take care of Mamma. (*He goes out, on the gallop.*)

Flossy. (*leading Mrs. Noah.*) Come, Mamma, let's go where the lights are.

Mrs. N. (*weeping gently.*) It is so dark, and the rain pours so, and the animals smell so bad. (*They go out, a stately progress, to the light of Flossy's candle.*)

(*The Curtain falls slowly, on the deserted Hall, with sounds of tremendous activity in the Animal Exhibit.*)

ACT III

(*The Night of the Same Day. The Hall in semi-gloom, a gloom punctured, occasionally, by the sleep-sounds of the neighboring animals. Enter, presently, FLOSSY, in a scarlet bathrobe, her hair in a tangled mop, walking in a halo of light cast by the candle she carries.*)

Flossy. (*advancing slowly, perhaps fearfully.*) It would be a good joke on Japheth if I'd find him first. He thinks I'm afraid. I'll show him. All women are not such cowards. (*stumbles.*) Ouch! I'm not really afraid of anything but rats.....I'm going to look in the loft. I think he's up there. Would n't it be funny if it was n't a little nigger boy at all,—if it was only the animals we hear! (*Stumbles again.*) I wish I had a lantern. There are a good many things to fall over. It's disgraceful the way the boys keep this Hall. I think Father ought to know about it. (*She stumbles over a small box, and the candle is extinguished.*) I've hurt my toe dreadfully. I guess it's broken. Oh my goodness, I have n't any matches!.....I wonder where I am? I forgot to look! (*She gropes around noisily.*) It's awfully dark. I wish I had left Japheth find the

little nigger boy! (*There comes a long, low grunt from one of the sleeping animals.*) Horrors, what if something would get loose? Shem says they're very restless in their sleep. I'll get on something high. (*There are sounds of scrambling and considerable physical exertion.*) I wish Japheth would come. I suppose he's around somewhere.....I wonder where Japheth is? My, it's cold!.....(*A heavy sigh, then another.*) I think it must be nearly morning. Somebody will be coming pretty soon to light the candles.....I wish I had let Japheth find the little nigger boy.....There's somebody coming! I won't say a word. Maybe it's Japheth. Oh, it's Father! It's Father! He's walking in his sleep; his eyes are open, but he does n't see a thing. (*A soft giggle.*) How comical he looks in that night cap! I'll let him go on past.

(*Enter MR. NOAH, in dressing gown and slippers, wearing also a sort of Mr. Pickwick cotton nightcap. He carries a large candle, and walks straight ahead, looking ditto, when suddenly his candle reveals a dishevelled crimson figure crouching on a high wooden box.*)

It's only me, Father,—Flossy.

Mr. N. (*falling back a step*). Florence! Why, Florence!

Flossy. (*tucking her robe about her feet anxiously*). Yes, Father, it's me,—Flossy, you know.

Mr. N. (*leaning weakly against a barrel*). Florence! Florence!

Flossy. Don't be scared. I'm all right.

Mr. N. Florence! I never was so astonished in my life!

Flossy. (*meekly*). Yes, Father.

Mr. N. (*recovering slightly*). I declare, you gave me quite a turn.

Flossy. Yes, Father. I was afraid to speak until you saw me. What are you doing?

Mr. N. (*gravely*). I am walking in my sleep.

Flossy. Oh.

Mr. N. And what are you doing, may I ask?

Flossy. (*with dimpled gravity*). I am—was—waiting for somebody to come.

Mr. N. You should be in your bed at this time of night. Have you lost anything?

Flossy. No, I have not lost anything.

Mr. N. Where is your candle?

Flossy. I dropped it when I fell. I stubbed my toe on something you know.

Mr. N. (*sternly, suspiciously*). Why are you up there?

Flossy. It's pretty high up, is n't? I was afraid some of the animals might get loose, and so I—I climbed up here. (*In sudden embarrassment, she tucks in her slippered feet. Then Mr. Noah, suddenly self-conscious, snatches off his nightcap.*)

Mr. N. (*setting his candle down on the barrel*). But what are you doing up there at all? You ought to be in your bed. It's past midnight.

Flossy. I thought it was nearly morning. My, it's cold up here. (*Mr. Noah gazes at her with unrelenting sternness*). Oh, you see Shem has a—a toothache, and we had n't any camphor in our room, and so I went to the storeroom for some, and—

Mr. N. But the storeroom is on the other side of the Boat.

Flossy. (*blandly*). Yes, Father, but I thought I would take a little walk. And as I was coming through the Hall, I stubbed my toe.

Mr. N. (*picking up her candle, and relighting it at his own*). Here is your candle, my dear. You select a singular time for a pleasure stroll. Why did n't Shem go for the camphor himself? I am ashamed of him. This is no place for a woman.

Flossy. (*dimpling*). His tooth hurt him too bad. It's perfectly awful,—a wisdom tooth, you know.

Mr. N. It's time he's cutting one. Where is the bottle, my dear, may I inquire?

Flossy. (*absorbed in snuffing her candle with her fingers*). What bottle? When we go back, let's play that we are a procession.

Mr. N. (*with some sternness*). The camphor bottle.

Flossy. It broke when I fell down. Ouch, I burned my finger!

Mr. N. I do not smell it.

Flossy. (*roguishly*). Smell the bottle?

Mr. N. I do not smell the camphor.

Flossy. (*with tremendous sniffs*). You don't? Oh, I do, awfully strong! You must have a cold. There, I got a whiff of it just then! Are you going to feed the animals? Let me go, won't you? It'll be such fun!

Mr. N. Hark! I guess it is nothing. No, I was—er—restless, and I thought a little walk would make me sleepy. You had better get down now, my dear. This is a most improper position for you. May I assist you?

Flossy. (*standing up, and gathering her draperies closely around her*). We can march just like a church procession,—candles and everything. I just love processions. Listen!

Mr. N. (*starting violently*). What? Where?

Flossy. There's somebody coming, I think, Father. Listen!

(*Enter SHEM, in light marching orders, carrying a stubby candle, and MRS. NOAH, in a big-flowered kimona, leaning on his arm.*)

Shem. (*stopping short*). Oh, there you are! (*In sheer astonishment, Flossy sinks to her seat on the box, with a shuddery little "Oh!"*)

Mrs. N. I was worried about you, Papa, and I woke Shem up, and we came to find you. I thought maybe you had found a leak. What's Flossy doing up there? You are all so strange that I am pretty nearly crazy. (*throwing herself into his arms*). Oh, Papa, what is it?

What is it? Why do you get up at night to feed the animals? And act as if you did n't see anybody when you looked at them? And Japheth looks scared all the time, as if he smelled fire. And Ham is so solemn and snappy! What is it,—oh, what is it? If there is a leak, tell me! I can bear it. We can but go down. What is this terrible secret? Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!

Mr. N. (soothing her). Mamma, you must restrain yourself. You will be ill. It is nothing,—a slight er—indisposition. There, be seated. (*She is, with many sighs.*)

Shem. (who has been staring at his wife). Well, and what are you doing up there, Missis! You make me tired.

Mr. N. (wheeling suddenly). How is your toothache, Shem?

Mrs. N. (looking out of her handkerchief). I did n't know you had the toothache, Shem. Why did n't you tell me? Nobody tells me anything. I might as well have stayed at home!

Shem. I have n't a toothache. Never said I had. (*To his wife, curtly.*) Here, give me that candle, and get down from there. Do try to act like a sensible woman for once. I should think you would be afraid.

Flossy. (meekly, rising). I am—dreadfully afraid.

Shem. Then go to bed like a rational being. (*There is a sound of scuffling somewhere.*) Listen!

Mrs. N. Everybody says "Listen!" all the time. My ears are standing straight up. (*The scuffling continues, to everybody's intense interest.*)

Flossy. (peering into the darkness). Maybe it's Japheth.

Shem. What would Japheth be doing up at this hour of the night?

Mr. N. Listen! Stop your clatter!

The Voice. (from without). Come on! You've got to!

Second Voice. (from without). I don't want ter! I don't want ter! (*Flossy gives one deep gasp, and sinks*

on the box as if shot. Mr. Noah is riveted, his eyes a-pop.)

The Voice. Come on, I say. You've got to! Come along!

Shem. In Adam's Name, what have we here?

(Enter JAPHETH, fully dressed, but rather the worse for wear, yanking JOHN SMITH along, bumping into things regardless. They finally struggle into the arc of light formed by the candles of the astonished group around Flossy.)

Flossy. (leaning eagerly forward). It is n't a little nigger boy, after all!

Mr. N. (in an indescribable voice). JOHN SMITH!

Mrs. N. (termulously). Johnnie Smith, you are a naughty, naughty boy! You stole those meat scraps! (John Smith continues to cry and struggle.)

Shem. So this is where we are at!

John S. Lemme go! Lemme go!

Japh. (holding him firmly by the collar.) No, sir, you won't go! I got you this time!

Mr. N. John Smith, when did you get aboard this Boat?

Mrs. N. (wiping her eyes). Oh Papa, don't be cross with him, poor little fellow! Look at his clothes! (She falls to weeping unrestrainedly.)

Mr. N. (unmoved). How long have you been aboard this Boat? Tell the truth.

Shem. (laying his hand on his Father's arm). Why, Father, he's been here as long as we have. You know he could n't get aboard after we started.

Mr. N. (staring hard at Shem). Certainly. That stands to reason. Who said he could? Don't be silly. (To John Smith.) How did you get on? That's all I want to know.

John S. (sobbing into his dirty sleeve). I want Ham! Where is Ham? I want ter see Ham!

Mrs. N. Somebody go get Hammie. The poor little fellow! Look at his clothes!

Shem. The poor little rat! I'll go get Ham. (*He goes out, with his candle.*)

Flossy. (*moping her eyes*). Let go of him, Japheth. He won't run away, will you, Johnnie Smith? (*Japheth unhands him.*)

John S. (*sniffing and rubbing his arm*). No, Ma'am.

Mrs. N. (*rising and going to the boy*). How is your Mamma, dear?

John S. (*politely*). I dunno. I aint seed her sence—sence we started. She's—I guess she's—she's—(*He turns timidly to Mr. Noah.*) Is everybody dead out there, Mr. Noah?

Mr. N. (*solemnly*). Yes, my boy, I'm afraid so. I'm afraid so.

John S. (*after a wide-eyed silence, blubbering right out*). I—I want my mother! I want my mother!

Flossy. (*scrambling off the high box, her hair all tumbling around her shoulders, and running to him*). Don't cry, dear! Don't cry! We'll take care of you!

Mrs. N. (*kneeling by his side*). You poor little boy! You poor little boy! Don't cry, Johnnie Smith!

Flossy. (*petting him*). I'll show you the lions, and the baby elephant. Do you like elephants?

John S. (*half sobbing, but not immune to elephants*). I've seed all the e—elephants. I seed the b—b—baby b—before ahy of yer did.

(*Enter, on the run, HAM, hastily dressed, and SHEM, with a candle.*)

Ham. Hello, Shiner! I'm glad to see you. Excuse my informal appearance. What are these—not tears?

John S. (*grinning a little*). Hello, Ham!

Ham. (*grasping his hand, as man to man*). Welcome to our ancestral halls! "There shall be showers of blessings!"

Flossy. (*dusting John Smith's clothes*). Are n't you hungry, dear?

John S. (*recovering his aplomb*). Yessir, you bet I am. I aint had 'nuff ter eat sence we started—not all at one time. I'm as hongery as yer make 'em. (*Flossy looks at Mrs. Noah, nods, takes up her candle, and goes out. Japheth leans against a barrel, gloomily observant.*)

Shem. (*gazing at the boy*). Where have you been all the time, John Smith?

Mr. N. Be quiet, Shem. It does not matter *where* he has been. First, let him tell us how he *dared*—(*Shem turns to Japheth, and discusses The Find with him, in animated pantomime, on the side.*)

Ham. (*turning to his father*). Now Pop, what's the use? He's here, and by George, he's a brick.—Have you been sea-sick, Shiner?

John S. (*with a swagger*). Naw, not a bit. The ole Tub's too stiddy fur that. An' I wuz too busy. You're got a good many animals, aint yer?

Ham (*imitating the swagger delicately*). Yes, the Main Show in the big tent is not without interest. I shall be pleased to show you the principal features of the exhibit.

“And next we come to the white Polar Bear,
Oft called ‘The Ice-Burg’s Daughter;’
Been known to drink ten kegs of beer,
Then call for soda water.”

John S. (*giggling joyously*). Yessir, it's jes' like a circus fer all the worl'! We've got everything but a callyhope! You could make a callyhope, if yer wanted to.

Ham. A “callyhope” is purely for processional purposes, Shiner, and the dimensions of the street parade were not considered when Father built this Ark.

Mr. N. (*seating himself wearily*). Ham, stop your nonsense.—John Smith, how did you get aboard this Boat? That's all I want to know, and I want to know that right now.

Ham. (*putting his arm around the outcast*). Tell us about it, Shiner. We are naturally curious. Come on, tell us about it, old pard.

Japh. (*turning from Shem a minute*). Go on, tell 'em, J. Smith. Nobody'll hurt you.

John S. (*facing Mr. Noah*). Ham, he—he carried me in, Mr. Noah.

Mr. N. (*with a heart-felt groan*). Hamilton, my son, my son! Can it be possible?

Ham. (*genially*). Well, Shiner, that's a rum one. What brand do you use? Think what you're saying.—Now, Pop, don't get excited. The game is young. Let him start over.

Mrs. N. You should never tell a lie, Johnnie Smith. It is a wicked, wicked thing to do. Where do you expect to go if you tell lies?

Japh. (*turning from Shem*). Give the boy a chance, you people. Go on, John Smith. Tell 'em straight. (*He resumes his pantomime recital to Shem.*)

John S. (*steadfastly addressing Mr. Noah*). Yessir Ham did, but he never knowed it. I clumb in that there trunk that was a-settin' on the bridge—

Mr. N. What bridge? You talk like a crazy boy.

Ham. The gangway, he means.—Go on, Shiner. The plot thickens.

John S. Mrs. Noah she wuz goin' ter put the bedspreads in, and Ham he called her ter cum jes' then, an'—

Mrs. N. (*patting John Smith on the head,—she is standing by his side as he talks*). Oh, yes, Papa, you remember.—Hammie, you remember. The girls left it there,—that old trunk I had when I was married. I was bound I would save that trunk, no matter what else I had to leave behind. Just as I was putting the things in, Ham called to me about the pantry shelves. You know Japheth had put them on the right side of the pantry, and I wanted them on the left. The best way to arrange pantry shelves—

Mr. N. The trunk that had the palm-leaf fan in it?

John S. (*eagerly*). Yessir, that wuz the very trunk! I clumb in an' shet the lid, an' Ham he drug it up the bridge. (*To Ham.*) You wuz whistlin' and you bumped me 'round somepin turribul!

Ham. It was a strenuous time, Shiner. You were lucky to get aboard at all. There were some very fine people that did n't get passage, you may remember.

John S. (*wagging his head earnestly*). I know there wuz. Lots of the fellers wanted ter come—wanted to like mad, but they wuz afraid. Why, one night Bob Rogers he stumped Skinny Martin to sneak in, and Skinny he clumb up the side, an' when he wuz tryin' the winder—

Ham. Old man Martin's boy,—that rapsCALLION with the wart over his eye?

John S. (*with an expansive grin*). Taint no wart; that's a piece of percushion cap that 'ploded when Skinney wuz a-fillin' cartridges onct.

Ham. Oh, come off! What you giving' us!

John S. (*expanding under this goodfellowship*). I'm givin' yer straight goods. I guess I ought to know. I wuz right by Skinney when he done it. Me and Skinney stole his father's gun, an' we wuz goin' huntin' fur snipe, an'—

(*Enter, in haste, MATILDA and JENNIE, in hasty toilets, the former with her hair in blue curl papers, and carrying a candle without any stick.*)

Jennie. (*breathlessly*). What is it? Oh, so you've found him? (*Mr. Noah squares himself to stare at her.*)

Matilda. Well, I'll declare, it's Johnnie Smith! Of all things! (*contemplates him curiously*). For pity's sake! Who found him?

Ham. Your husband. He's been on private detective duty for a week, it seems.—Japh, come forward and receive the honors.

Japh. (*yawning*). Honors nothin'. Put out the

lights in the ticket office. Me for the bed. Give me a candle, somebody. (*He starts out.*)

Ham. Hold on there! What shall we do with this kid? He's your discovery.

Japh. Give him a Turkish bath. I'll make my deposition tomorrow. (*Goes.*)

Matilda. (*contemplating John Smith*). Yes, he'd better be washed. (*She and Jennie consult apart.*)

Ham. The sooner the quicker, I should say, contemplating his unboraxed condition.—Which would you rather do first, John Smith, wash or eat?

John S. Eat. I kin wash any time.

Ham. Spoken like a philosopher. You girls go get some water. If he has to wash first, he must wash quick. (*Matilda goes in haste.*)

Mr. N. (*who has scarcely taken his scared gaze off the boy's face*). This is terrible, terrible. It is a most awful thing to have happen. (*He buries his face in his hands.*)

John S. (*going timidly up to Mr. Noah*). Do you mean me, Mr. Noah?

Ham. No, he means the animals and the leaks and the fires. It's a complication of the terrible.—Come on, Pop, jolly up. What's the use? It all comes in a life time. Play the game.—John Smith, alias "Shiner," you're a pippin. I see it now; what we needed all along was a small boy. The idea of running a boat without a small boy! It's ridiculous.

John S. (*unheeding, and looking at Mr. Noah twistfully*). I wisht I had n't come. I wisht I had n't come. He don't want me. He don't want me.

Jennie. (*bending over him*). Yes he does, dear, he does. Of course he does, but he's tired and worried about things.

Ham. (*looking thoughtfully at his father's bowed head*). We not only want you, Shiner; we need you. The Professor here (*indicating the meditative Shem, leaning silent against a distant barrel*) is not a practical

animal man. His astronomical observations are not without current interest, even a scientific interest in their broader aspects, but his knowledge of zoology is—well, on the bum. You can help me rearrange the leopard's spots tomorrow, and curry the zebras.

John S. (furtively getting hold of Ham's hand, but glancing sadly at Mr. Noah). I kin hep you lots. I know a heap about animals. An' I kin 'tend to the circus part. They ought allus to have a boy with a circus, to sew on the spangles and run errants. Don't you think? (*twistfully*).

Ham. Sure thing. Now you're shoutin'. You are hereby officially elected to membership in the Association for the Renovation of Human Society, and installed Attendant in Ordinary to the only Exhibition of Ante-Deluvian Monsters now before the Public. (*strikes an attitude*). Right this way, ladies and gentlemen, right this way! An Opportunity Unparalleled in the History of the Animal Kingdom. A chaste and elegant entertainment for the Young, but the Old may attend with Profit. Bring the little ones, the baby ones, the darling ones! All for fifty cents, only fifty cents, the infinitesimal sum of fifty cents!

John S. (gazing at Ham admiringly). Let's you and me have a reel circus! You kin be ringmaster the first day. I'll let yer.

Ham. (who is enjoying himself immensely). Thank you, Shiner. That's very handsome of you, considering your own ambitions. I'll see to the billboards personally. "Sensational 100-foot High Slide for Life, by Mademoiselle Correa, Acknowledged to be the Queen of Mid-Air, and recognized by Press and Pulpit everywhere as the Brunette Beauty of the Circus World." How does that sound?

Mr. N. (in an awful voice). Hamilton! Let us have no more of this.

Jennie. (hastily). I think he ought to be washed, don't you, Mamma?

Mrs. N. (taking up a candle). Yes, I think he

ought. Come, Johnnie Smith, Let's go and get your face washed.

John S. (meekly, eying Mrs. Noah). Yessum.

Jennie. (taking his unengaged hand). And you shall have a beautiful white bed, with lace on the pillow-slips. Won't that be nice?

John S. Yessum.

Mrs. N. (moving away with much majesty). And you'll never be a homesick, lonesome little boy any more.

John S. (suppressing a sob). Yessum. *(The three disappear into the environing darkness.)*

Ham. (looking after them sadly). He'll be all right after he has visited the Commissary Department.

Shem. (rousing himself). It will take a month to get him bleached out.

Mr. N. (looking into the darkness whence they disappeared). This is a terrible thing.

Shem. (fitting a candle into the empty stick he takes from his pocket). Oh, I don't know. The boy can't do much damage.

Mr. N. (with a volcanic sigh). Oh, I don't mind saving the poor little rat, but, my son, we were under contract to carry no passengers.

Ham. (with a slight yawn). Yes, the Contract's broken all to smash.

Mr. N. (helplessly, looking from the one to the other). I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do.

Shem. (piling up boxes with cheerful clatter). It might be well to cut a few roadways through this confusion. It's getting too thick for comfort. He is n't a passenger. He's a dead-head, like the animals.

Ham. (with an unembarrassed yawn). Yes, label him "Newly-Discovered Specimen of an Unknown Species," and let it go at that.

Mr. N. (rising like a wooden man). It is a most terrible thing to have happen to us. I don't know what to do.

Ham. (*yawning*). Don't do anything definite until he's washed. Then we can determine his color. That may help some. Anyway, he'll give the women something to cry over. That cry they had did them lots of good. And we have preserved a Smith. We really ought to have a Smith, if we are to save one of every kind. How could Society be perpetuated without the Smiths?

Shem. (*turning from the boxes, with a yawn*). A manifest impossibility. We have completed History by this night's work.

Ham. (*with a prodigious yawn*). No, only added a P. S. No man completes History, not even the Progenitor of all the Smiths. Oh, let's go to bed. "For, by my fay, I can not reason!" Give me a light, Professor. (*He lights his candle at Shem's, yawning largely as he does so.*)

Shem. (*almost engulfed in his own yawns*). Let's. I have n't had a wink of sleep for a week.

Mr. N. (*lifting his candle from the barrel with a melancholy air*). Yes, we have preserved a Smith—if it were worth while. (*They file out, one by one, solemnly, each carrying his candle. Then, "darkness again and a silence," a silence intensified by a growl or two from the Main Show on the side lines. Then, a very slow curtain.*)

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